



Senator Feinstein Introduces Private Bill to Provide
Permanent Residence Status to Plascencia Family
June 18, 2004

Washington, DC – Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) introduced legislation today to provide lawful permanent resident status to Alfredo Plascencia Lopez and his wife, Maria del Refugio Plascencia, two undocumented immigrants who live in San Bruno, California with their four children, all of whom are American citizens. The Plascencias have lived in the United States since 1988.

Following is Senator Feinstein's floor statement introducing the private bill:

“Mr. President, I rise today to offer legislation to provide lawful permanent residence status to Alfredo Plascencia Lopez and his wife, Maria del Refugio Plascencia, Mexican nationals who live in the San Bruno area of California.

I have decided to offer legislation on their behalf because I believe that, without it, this hardworking couple and their four United States citizen children would endure an immense and unfair hardship. Indeed, without this legislation, this family may not remain a family for much longer.

The Plascencia's have worked for years to adjust their status through the appropriate legal channels, only to have their efforts thwarted by inattentive legal counsel. Repeatedly, the Plascencia's lawyer refused to return their calls or otherwise communicate with them in anyway. He also failed to forward crucial immigration documents, or even notify the Plascencias that he had them. Because of the poor representation they received, Mr. and Mrs. Plascencia only became aware that they had been ordered to leave the country fifteen days prior to their deportation. Although the family was stunned and devastated by this discovery, they acted quickly to secure legitimate counsel and to file the appropriate paperwork to delay their deportation to determine if any other legal action could be taken.

The Plascencias current date of removal from the United States is set for June 23rd.

For several reasons, it would be tragic for this family to be removed from the United States.

First, since arriving in the United States in 1988, Mr. and Mrs. Plascencia have proven themselves to be a responsible and civic-minded couple who share our American values of hard work, dedication to family and devotion to community.

Second, Mr. Plascencia has been gainfully employed at Vince's Shellfish for the past 13 years, where his dedication and willingness to learn have propelled him from part-time work to a managerial position. He now oversees the market's entire packing operation and several employees. The president of the market, in one of the several dozen letters I have received in support of Mr. Plascencia, referred to him as 'a valuable and respected employee' who 'handles himself in a very professional manner' and serves as 'a role model' to other employees. Others who have written to me praising Mr. Plascencia's job performance have referred to him as 'gifted,' 'trusted,' 'honest' and 'reliable.'

Third, like her husband, Mrs. Plascencia has distinguished herself as a medical assistant at a Kaiser Permanente hospital in the Bay Area. Not satisfied with working as a maid at a local hotel, Mrs. Plascencia went to school, earned her high school equivalency degree and improved her skills to become a medical assistant. Until her work permit expired last week, Mrs. Plascencia was working in Kaiser Permanente's Oncology Department, where she attended to cancer patients. Those who have written to me in support of Mrs. Plascencia, of which there are several, have described her work as 'responsible,' 'efficient,' and 'compassionate.'

In fact, Kaiser Permanente's Director of Internal Medicine, Nurse Rose Carino, wrote to say that Mrs. Plascencia is 'an asset to the community and exemplifies the virtues we Americans extol: hardworking, devoted to her family, trustworthy and loyal, [and] involved in her community. She and her family are a solid example of the type of immigrant that America should welcome wholeheartedly.' Mrs. Carino went on to write that Mrs. Plascencia is 'an excellent employee and role model for her colleagues. She works in a very demanding unit, Oncology, and is valued and depended on by the physicians she works with.'

Together, Mr. and Mrs. Plascencia have used their professional successes to realize many of the goals dreamed of by all Americans. They saved up and bought a home. They own a car. They have good health care benefits and they each have begun saving for retirement. They want to send their children to college and give them an even better life.

This legislation is important because it would preserve these achievements and ensure that Mr. and Mrs. Plascencia will be able to make substantive contributions to the community in the future. It is important, also, because of the positive impact it will have on the couple's children, each of whom is a United States citizen and each of whom is well on their way to becoming productive members of the Bay Area community.

Christina, 13, is the Plascencia's oldest child, and an honor student with a 3.0 grade-point average at Parkside Intermediate School in San Bruno.

Erika, 9, and Alfredo, Jr., 7, are enrolled at Belle Air Elementary, where they have worked hard at their studies and received praise and good grades from their teachers. In fact, last year, the principal of Erika's school recognized her as the 'Most Artistic' student in her class. Recently, Erika's teacher, Mrs. Nascon, remarked on a report card, 'Erika is a bright spot in my classroom.'

The Plascencia's youngest child is 2 year-old Daisy.

Removing Mr. and Mrs. Plascencia from the United States would be tragic for their children. Children who were born in the United States and who through no fault of

their own have been thrust into a situation that has the potential to dramatically alter their lives.

It would be especially tragic for the Plascencias' older children – Christina, Erika and Alfredo – to have to leave the United States. They are old enough to understand that they are leaving their schools, their teachers, their friends and their home. They would leave everything that is familiar to them. Their parents would find themselves in Mexico without a job and without a house. The children would have to acclimate to a different culture, language and way of life.

The only other option would be for Mr. and Mrs. Plascencia to leave their children here with relatives. This separation is a choice which no parents should have to make.

Many of the words I have used to describe Mr. and Mrs. Plascencia are not my own. They are the words of the Americans who live and work with the Plascencias day in and day out and who find them to embody the American spirit. I have sponsored this legislation, and asked my colleagues to support it, because I believe that this is a spirit that we must nurture wherever we can find it. Forcing the Plascencias to leave the United States would extinguish that spirit.”

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